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EXAMINER	
LOVEL, KIMBERLY M	

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary	Application No.	Applicant(s)	
	10/828,470	KANATSU, TOMOTOSHI	
	Examiner	Art Unit	
	KIMBERLY LOVEL	2167	

-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --

Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

1)☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on *13 February 2009*.

2a)☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b)☐ This action is non-final.

3)☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

4)☒ Claim(s) *1,3-5,7,8,10 and 13-19* is/are pending in the application.

4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.

5)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.

6)☒ Claim(s) *1,3-5, 7, 8, 10 and 13-19* is/are rejected.

7)☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.

8)☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

9)☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.

10)☐ The drawing(s) filed on _____ is/are: a)☐ accepted or b)☐ objected to by the Examiner.

Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).

Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).

11)☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

12)☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).

a)☐ All b)☐ Some * c)☐ None of:

1.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.

2.☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.

3.☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

1) ☒ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
2) ☐ Notice of Draftsperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08) Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____.
4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413) Paper No(s)/Mail Date. _____.
5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
6) ☐ Other: _____.

DETAILED ACTION

1. This communication is in response to the Amendment filed 13 February 2009.

2. Claims 1, 3-5, 7, 8, 10 and 13-19 are currently pending. In the Amendment filed 13 February 2009, claims 1, 10, 13 and 16-18 are amended and claims 2, 6, 9, 11 and 12 are canceled. This action is made Final.

3. The previous prior art rejections have been withdrawn as necessitated by amendment.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 112

4. The following is a quotation of the first paragraph of 35 U.S.C. 112:

> The specification shall contain a written description of the invention, and of the manner and process of making and using it, in such full, clear, concise, and exact terms as to enable any person skilled in the art to which it pertains, or with which it is most nearly connected, to make and use the same and shall set forth the best mode contemplated by the inventor of carrying out his invention.

5. Claims 1 and 16-18 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the written description requirement. The claim(s) contains subject matter which was not described in the specification in such a way as to reasonably convey to one skilled in the relevant art that the inventor(s), at the time the application was filed, had possession of the claimed invention. The examiner fails to find support in the specification for the limitation of registering the feature data acquired in step (b) in an index file. The examiner only finds support for the concepts of storing keywords [i.e., the first search information input by the user] in an index and searching the index utilizing a keyword.

35 USC § 101 - Clarifications

6. Claims 17 and 18 include a computer-readable medium. The medium is construed as being the ROM or storage medium mentioned on page 51, lines 20-23 and is considered to be limited to statutory mediums.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

7. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

> (a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negatived by the manner in which the invention was made.

8. Claims 1, 3-5, 7, 8, 10, 13 and 15-19 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over US Patent No 5,911,139 to Jain et al (hereafter Jain et al) in view of US PGPub 2002/0106135 to Iwane (hereafter Iwane) in view of US Patent No 6,961,463 to Loui et al (hereafter Loui) in view of US PGPub 2002/0176116 to Rhodes et al (hereafter Rhodes) in view of US Patent No 7,127,106 to Neil et al (hereafter Neil) in view of US PGPub 2003/0120650 to Wills (hereafter Wills).

Referring to claim 1, Jain discloses an image processing method implemented by a computer for selectively storing an input image in a database, comprising the steps of:

(a) acquiring first search information [alpha-numeric query] associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user (see column 9, lines 11-15);

(b) acquiring feature data [feature vector] contained in the input image as second search information (see column 9, lines 45-48);

(c) searching for an original data file corresponding to the input image in the database by using the first [alpha-numeric query] and second [feature vector] search information (see column 9, lines 52-67); and

(d) converting the input image into data [vector data] and storing the data in the database [database 132] (Jain: see column 9, lines 40-52).

However, Jain et al fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of the data in step (d) being outline data and wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object. Iwane discloses obtaining an input image and then generating image information in order to compare objects (see abstract), including the further limitation of converting the input image into outline data and storing the outline data in the database (see [0244]), wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object (see [0173]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the outlining method of Iwane in order to gather the feature information stored by Jain. One would have been motivated to do so in order to be able to extract features from an image in a case where OCR is not a viable solution (Iwane: see [0010]-[0012]).

However, the combination of Jain and Iwane (hereafter Jain/Iwane) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of (d) wherein the image is only stored in a case

where the original file corresponding to the input is not found in said step (c); and (e) declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the image file corresponding to the input image is found in said step (c). Loui discloses a duplicate detection algorithm to determine whether two pictures are so similar that a consumer would only put one of them in the album [database], including the further limitations of wherein the image is only stored in a case where the image file corresponding to the input is not found in said step (c); and (e) declining to store the input image data into the database, in a case that the image file corresponding to the input image is found in said step (c) (see column 4, lines 11-51) since the concept of storing only one copy of an image increases storage efficiency and search efficiency.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the duplicate detection algorithm of Loui with the storage system of Jain/Iwane. One would have been motivated to do since the methodology of Loui can be embodied in any different types of systems (Loui: see column 7, lines 13-24) and since the concept of storing only one copy of an image increases storage efficiency and search efficiency.

The combination of Jain/Iwane and Loui (hereafter Jane/Iwane/Loui) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitations of attempting to detect pointer information from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database and using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected. Rhodes discloses embedding watermarks into images (see abstract), including the further limitations of attempting to detect pointer information [watermark readers perform this

function] from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database and using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected [carry a pointer or network address to its electronic original] (see [0024] and [0043]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to first attempt to search for a watermark pointing to the location of an original file as disclosed by Rhodes before searching for the file utilizing the search features of Jain/Iwane/Loui. One would have been motivated to do so in order to increase the efficiency and accuracy of the searching process since a pointer links directly to the original file.

The combination of Jain/Iwane/Loui and Rhodes (hereafter Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of (f) registering the information input by the user in step (a) and the feature data acquired in step (b) in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file in step (c). Neil discloses image processing (see abstract and Fig 5), including the further limitation of (f) registering the information input by the user in step (a) [text annotation] and the feature data [visual features] acquired in step (b) in an index file [images may be indexed based on visual features, text annotation, assigned subjects or image types] (see column 1, lines 65-66).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the step of Neil to index the database of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes. One would have been motivated to do so since it is well-known in the art that the use of

an index increases the speed and efficiency of a search while decreasing resource costs.

The combination of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes and Neil (hereafter Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of the index, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file in step (c). Wills discloses the creation of an index, including the further limitation of wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file (see [0031]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply the use of an index as disclosed by Wills to the index of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil. One would have been motivated to do so since it is well-known in the art that the use of an index increases the speed and efficiency of a search while decreasing resource costs.

Referring to claim 3, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises a keyword [keywords] for searching using the input image (Jain: see Fig 3, item 201 and column 9, lines 11-15).

Referring to claim 4, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises a data size [file size] of the original data file (Jain: see Fig 3, item 201 and column 9, lines 11-15).

Referring to claim 5, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the first search information comprises date information [File Date] of the original data file (Jain: see Fig 3, item 201 and column 9, lines 11-15).

Referring to claim 7, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the second search information comprises a character code of a character recognition [face recognition] result which is obtained by performing a character recognition process with respect to a character region in the input image (Jain: see column 25, lines 31-41).

Referring to claim 8, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein the second search information comprises feature data of each block obtained by the region segmentation of the input image (Jain: see column 9, lines 45-67).

Referring to claim 10, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of: (f) converting the input image, which has been converted into the vector data, into data in a format which can be handled by application software (Jain: see column 31, lines 12-14).

Referring to claim 13, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 1, further comprising the step of: (g) outputting the original data file, wherein new pointer information is added to the original data file (Jain: see column 14, lines 7-19; Rhodes: see [0022]).

Referring to claim 14, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 13, wherein the new pointer information is added as a digital watermark to the original data file (Rhodes: see [0022]).

Referring to claim 15, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 1, wherein in the step (c), the original data file is searched for by

using at least one of keyword search [keywords], full-text search, and layout search (Jain: see Fig 3, item 201 and column 9, lines 11-15).

Referring to claim 16, Jain discloses an image processing system selectively stores an image file corresponding to an input image, comprising:

an input unit constructed to input acquiring first search information [alpha-numeric query] associated with the input image (see column 9, lines 11-15);

a acquisition unit constructed to search for acquiring feature data [feature vector] contained in the input image as second search information (see column 9, lines 45-48);

a search unit constructed to search for an original data file corresponding to the input image in a database by using the first [alpha-numeric query] and second [feature vector] search information (see column 9, lines 52-67); and

a conversion unit constructed to convert the input image into data [vector data] and to store the data in the database [database 132] (Jain: see column 9, lines 40-52).

However, Jain fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of the data being outline data and wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object. Iwane discloses obtaining an input image and then generating image information in order to compare objects (see abstract), including the further limitation of converting the input image into outline data and storing the outline data in the database (see [0244]), wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object (see [0173]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the outlining method of Iwane in order to gather the feature

information stored by Jain. One would have been motivated to do so in order to be able to extract features from an image in a case where OCR is not a viable solution (Iwane: see [0010]-[0012]).

However, Jain/Iwane fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of wherein the original data file is only stored in a case where the original data file corresponding to the input is not found by said search unit; and a unit constructed to decline storing the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image file is found by said search unit. Loui discloses a duplicate detection algorithm to determine whether two pictures are so similar that a consumer would only put one of them in the album [database], including the further limitations of wherein the image is only stored in a case where no original data file corresponding to the input image is found by said search unit; and a unit constructed to decline storing the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image file is found by said search unit (see column 4, lines 11-51) since the concept of storing only one copy of an image increases storage efficiency and search efficiency.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the duplicate detection algorithm of Loui with the storage system of Jain/Iwane. One would have been motivated to do since the methodology of Loui can be embodied in any different types of systems (Loui: see column 7, lines 13-24) and since the concept of storing only one copy of an image increases storage efficiency and search efficiency.

The combination of Jain/Iwane and Loui (hereafter Jane/Iwane/Loui) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitations of attempting to detect pointer information from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database and using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected. Rhodes discloses embedding watermarks into images (see abstract), including the further limitations of attempting to detect pointer information [watermark readers perform this function] from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database and using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected [carry a pointer or network address to its electronic original] (see [0024] and [0043]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to first attempt to search for a watermark pointing to the location of an original file as disclosed by Rhodes before searching for the file utilizing the search features of Jain/Iwane/Loui. One would have been motivated to do so in order to increase the efficiency and accuracy of the searching process since a pointer links directly to the original file.

Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of a registration unit for registering the information input by the input step and the feature data acquired by the acquisition step in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file by the search unit. Neil discloses image processing (see abstract and Fig 5), including the further limitation of a registration unit registering the information input by the input step [text annotation] and the feature data [visual

features] acquired by the acquisition unit in an index file [images may be indexed based on visual features, text annotation, assigned subjects or image types] (see column 1, lines 65-66).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the step of Neil to index the database of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes. One would have been motivated to do so since it is well-known in the art that the use of an index increases the speed and efficiency of a search while decreasing resource costs.

The combination of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes and Neil (hereafter Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of the index, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file by the search unit. Wills discloses the creation of an index, including the further limitation of wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file (see [0031]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply the use of an index as disclosed by Wills to the index of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil. One would have been motivated to do so since it is well-known in the art that the use of an index increases the speed and efficiency of a search while decreasing resource costs.

Referring to claim 17, Jain discloses a computer executable program stored on a computer-readable storage medium for selectively storing an image file corresponding to an input image, comprising:

code [alpha-numeric query input module 106] for acquiring first search information [alpha-numeric query] associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user (see column 9, lines 11-15);

code [Query Canvas module 108 or Image Browsing Module 110] for acquiring feature data [feature vector] contained in the input image as second search information (see column 9, lines 45-48);

code [VIR Engine 120 comprises modules] for searching for an original data file corresponding to the input image in a database by using the first [alpha-numeric query] and second [feature vector] search information (see column 9, lines 40-41 and 52-67); and

code for converting the input image into data [vector data] and to store the data in the database [database 132] (Jain: see column 9, lines 40-52).

However, Jain et al fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of the data being outline data and wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object. Iwane discloses obtaining an input image and then generating image information in order to compare objects (see abstract), including the further limitation of converting the input image into outline data and storing the outline data in the database (see [0244]), wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object (see [0173]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the outlining method of Iwane in order to gather the feature

information stored by Jain. One would have been motivated to do so in order to be able to extract features from an image in a case where OCR is not a viable solution (Iwane: see [0010]-[0012]).

However, Jain/Iwane fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of wherein the image is only stored in a case where the original data file corresponding to the input is not found by said search unit; and code for declining storing the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image file is found by said search unit. Loui discloses a duplicate detection algorithm to determine whether two pictures are so similar that a consumer would only put one of them in the album [database], including the further limitations of wherein the image is only stored in a case where no original data file corresponding to the input image is found by said search unit; and code for declining storing the input image data into the database, in a case that the original data file corresponding to the input image file is found by said search unit (see column 4, lines 11-51) since the concept of storing only one copy of an image increases storage efficiency and search efficiency.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the duplicate detection algorithm of Loui with the storage system of Jain/Iwane. One would have been motivated to do since the methodology of Loui can be embodied in any different types of systems (Loui: see column 7, lines 13-24) and since the concept of storing only one copy of an image increases storage efficiency and search efficiency.

The combination of Jain/Iwane and Loui (hereafter Jane/Iwane/Loui) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitations of attempting to detect pointer information from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database and using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected. Rhodes discloses embedding watermarks into images (see abstract), including the further limitations of attempting to detect pointer information [watermark readers perform this function] from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database and using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected [carry a pointer or network address to its electronic original] (see [0024] and [0043]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to first attempt to search for a watermark pointing to the location of an original file as disclosed by Rhodes before searching for the file utilizing the search features of Jain/Iwane/Loui. One would have been motivated to do so in order to increase the efficiency and accuracy of the searching process since a pointer links directly to the original file.

The combination of Jain/Iwane/Loui and Rhodes (hereafter Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of code for registering the information input by the user and the acquired feature data in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file. Neil discloses image processing (see abstract and Fig 5), including the further limitation of (f) registering the information input by the user [text annotation] and the acquired feature

data [visual features] in an index file [images may be indexed based on visual features, text annotation, assigned subjects or image types] (see column 1, lines 65-66).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the step of Neil to index the database of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes. One would have been motivated to do so since it is well-known in the art that the use of an index increases the speed and efficiency of a search while decreasing resource costs.

The combination of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes and Neil (hereafter Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of the index, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file. Wills discloses the creation of an index, including the further limitation of wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file (see [0031]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply the use of an index as disclosed by Wills to the index of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil. One would have been motivated to do so since it is well-known in the art that the use of an index increases the speed and efficiency of a search while decreasing resource costs.

Referring to claim 18, Jain discloses a computer-readable medium having a computer executable program stored thereon for search for an original data file corresponding to an input image, the program comprising:

code [alpha-numeric query input module 106] for acquiring first search information [alpha-numeric query] associated with the input image on the basis of information input by a user (see column 9, lines 11-15);

code [Query Canvas module 108 or Image Browsing Module 110] for acquiring feature data [feature vector] contained in the input image as second search information (see column 9, lines 45-48); and

code [VIR Engine 120 comprises modules] for searching for an original data file corresponding to the input image by using the first [alpha-numeric query] and second [feature vector] search information (see column 9, lines 40-41 and 52-67); and

code for converting the input image into data [vector data] and to store the vector data in the database [database 132] (Jain: see column 9, lines 40-52).

However, Jain fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of the data in step (d) being outline data and wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object. Iwane discloses obtaining an input image and then generating image information in order to compare objects (see abstract), including the further limitation of converting the input image into outline data and storing the outline data in the database (see [0244]), wherein the outline data indicates a visual representation of a tracing of the outline of a character or a graphic object (see [0173]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the outlining method of Iwane in order to gather the feature information stored by Jain. One would have been motivated to do so in order to be able

to extract features from an image in a case where OCR is not a viable solution (Iwane: see [0010]-[0012]).

However, Jain/Iwane fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of wherein the image is only stored in a case where the image file corresponding to the input is not found by said search unit; and code for declining storing the input image data into the database, in a case that the image file corresponding to the input image file is found by said search unit. Loui discloses a duplicate detection algorithm to determine whether two pictures are so similar that a consumer would only put one of them in the album [database], including the further limitations of wherein the image is only stored in a case where no image file corresponding to the input image is found by said search unit; and code for declining storing the input image data into the database, in a case that the image file corresponding to the input image file is found by said search unit (see column 4, lines 11-51) since the concept of storing only one copy of an image increases storage efficiency and search efficiency.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the duplicate detection algorithm of Loui with the storage system of Jain/Iwane. One would have been motivated to do since the methodology of Loui can be embodied in any different types of systems (Loui: see column 7, lines 13-24) and since the concept of storing only one copy of an image increases storage efficiency and search efficiency.

The combination of Jain/Iwane and Loui (hereafter Jane/Iwane/Loui) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitations of attempting to detect pointer information from

the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database and using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected. Rhodes discloses embedding watermarks into images (see abstract), including the further limitations of attempting to detect pointer information [watermark readers perform this function] from the input image indicating a storage location of an original data file in the database and using the pointer information in a case that the pointer information is detected [carry a pointer or network address to its electronic original] (see [0024] and [0043]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to first attempt to search for a watermark pointing to the location of an original file as disclosed by Rhodes before searching for the file utilizing the search features of Jain/Iwane/Loui. One would have been motivated to do so in order to increase the efficiency and accuracy of the searching process since a pointer links directly to the original file.

The combination of Jain/Iwane/Loui and Rhodes (hereafter Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of code for registering the information input by the user and the acquired feature data in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file. Neil discloses image processing (see abstract and Fig 5), including the further limitation of (f) registering the information input by the user [text annotation] and the acquired feature data [visual features] in an index file [images may be indexed based on visual features, text annotation, assigned subjects or image types] (see column 1, lines 65-66).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to utilize the step of Neil to index the database of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes. One would have been motivated to do so since it is well-known in the art that the use of an index increases the speed and efficiency of a search while decreasing resource costs.

The combination of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes and Neil (hereafter Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil) fails to explicitly disclose the further limitation of the index, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file. Wills discloses the creation of an index, including the further limitation of wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file (see [0031]).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to apply the use of an index as disclosed by Wills to the index of Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil. One would have been motivated to do so since it is well-known in the art that the use of an index increases the speed and efficiency of a search while decreasing resource costs.

Referring to claim 19, Jain/Iwane/Loui/Rhodes/Neil/Wills discloses the method according to claim 13, wherein the new pointer information is added as a two-dimensional barcode [digital watermarking] to the original data file (Rhodes: see [0022]).

Response to Arguments

9. Referring to Applicant's arguments on page 11 of the Remarks, the Applicant states "The applied art is not seen to disclose or suggest the features of independent Claims 1 and 16-18, and in particular is not seen to disclose or suggest at least the feature of registering information input by a user and feature data acquired from an input image in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for an original data file." Claim 1 has been amended to recite the limitation "(f) registering the information input by the user in step (a) and the feature data acquired in step (b) in an index file, wherein the index file is used in a next search for the original data file in step (c)." Canceled claim 2 previously stated the limitation "(f) registering the first search information as an index for searching for the original data file in an index file. Canceled claim 12 previously stated "The method according to claim 10, further comprising the step of (g) registering the first search information, in an index file, as an index for searching for an image represented by the outline data stored in the database in step (d). The scopes of claims 2 and 12 are considered to differ from the scope of the amended limitation of claim 1, therefore, the argument is considered to be moot in view of new grounds of rejection.

Conclusion

10. Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Contact Information

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to KIMBERLY LOVEL whose telephone number is (571)272-2750. The examiner can normally be reached on 8:00 - 4:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Cottingham can be reached on (571) 272-7079. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see http://pair-direct.uspto.gov. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/John R. Cottingham/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 2167

/Kimberly Lovel/
Examiner
Art Unit 2167

22 April 2009
/KL/